



# MNSPECT

HELPING YOU COMPLY WITH THE CODE

235 First Street West • Waconia, MN 55387-1302

## Inspection Personnel:

- Scott Qualle, Designated Building Official
- Ty Turnquist, Operations Director, Senior Commercial Plans Examiner
- Kossi Noglo, Relationship Manager
- Nick Qualle, Senior Residential Plans Examiner/Field Inspector
- Derek Qualle, Rental/Field Inspector
- Dale Engelmann, Senior Plumbing Plans Examiner/Plumbing Inspector
- Steve Maki, Field Inspector
- Dean Mau, Senior Fire Plans Examiner
- Tracy Montgomery, Office Manager
- Wendy Morrissey, Administrative Assistant
- Brandy Blauert, Operations Assistant

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Tracy Montgomery (8 yrs) City of Hamburg (27 yrs)  
Castle Rock Twp. (8 yrs) City of Spring Park (8 yrs)

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## MNSPECT MINUTE

June 2016

### What? Retaining Walls Require A Permit?

Yes, yes they do! Well, some of them anyway. MN Rules, Chapter 1300.0120 Subp. 4 clearly identifies retaining walls as a project that might need a permit. This is what it says: "Work Exempt from permit. Exemptions from permit requirements of the code do not authorize work to be done in any manner in violation of the code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction. Permits shall not be required for the following: . . .(4) Retaining walls that are not over four feet (1219 mm) in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding Class I, II, or III-A liquids." So, if your retaining wall is over four feet in height, from the footing, not the ground, it needs a building permit.

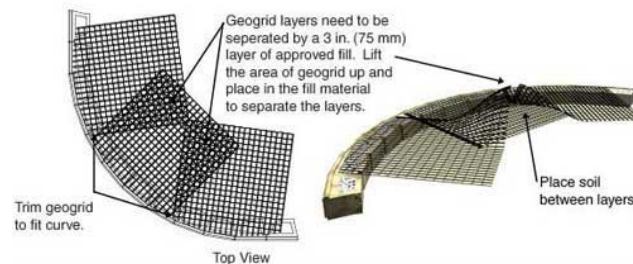
You may be asking: What on earth would they need to see? Well, we would inspect the following:

- Footings and drainage to make sure that it is in place.
- Geogrid installation (Wikipedia: A **geogrid** is geosynthetic material used to reinforce soils and similar materials. **Geogrids** are commonly used to reinforce retaining walls, as well as subbases or subsoils below roads or structures. Soils pull apart under tension.)



### What type of "repairs" do not require a permit?

MN Rules, Chapter 1300.0120 Subp. 6 actually tells us what work can't be completed without a building permit: "The repairs shall not include the opening or removal of any wall, partition, or portion of a wall or partition, the removal or cutting of any structural beam or load bearing support, or the removal or change of any required means of egress, or rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements; nor shall ordinary repairs include addition to, alteration of, replacement, or relocation of any standpipe, water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, electric wiring, or mechanical or other work affecting public health or general safety.



(Think of how if you stack a bunch of boxes on top of each other, they are more likely to fall than if you have a shelf between each set of boxes – geogrid works the same way. The geogrid connects back to the soil that is most likely not going to put pressure on the retaining wall.)

- Final to verify installation is complete and correct, that all inspections have occurred, required special inspection reports were received, and that the site is cleaned up.

Footings, drainage, geogrids? All for a retaining wall? A lot of people might be thinking, "Can't we just stack some landscaping bricks up and call it good? Isn't that what they are made for?" Yes, they are made for retaining walls – similar to how wood studs are designed for building houses. However, if the studs are not installed with the correct fasteners, supports, cuts, etc, they will not hold up the house. Most retaining wall blocks available at home improvement stores are limited to 16-40" max wall height (check the small print).



If you have a story idea for our newsletter or would like to know if your project requires a permit, please call us at 952-442-7520 or e-mail us at info@mnspect.com.

If you are planning on doing a retaining wall project and have questions regarding the permit submittal or code-related questions, please call us at 952-442-7520.